



May 20, 2021

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau,

We write as a group of parliamentarians, including 24 Members of Parliament and two Senators, working together in a shared, non-partisan commitment to peace in the Middle East. Our focus as the Canada-Palestinian Parliamentary Friendship Group is to advance the recognition and protection of human rights for Palestinian people. We are also joined with Parliamentarians from outside the Friendship Group.

We write in the immediate aftermath of reports of a ceasefire being announced between the parties in the Middle East. We are carefully watching and hoping this reported ceasefire holds so that no more civilian lives are lost.

Clearly, there can be no two-state solution with ongoing illegal settlement expansions year over year and if there is no territory for the Palestinians. The current situation of the escalating crisis, with a significant threat of a widening conflict, prompts us to write.

We share the views expressed by the UN Special Rapporteurs in their May 11, 2021 statement, as an appendix.

It is no longer adequate for Canada to ignore the multiple violations of Palestinian human rights by the Israeli Government. Canada must go beyond statements of concern and work with the international community to condemn forced evictions, settlement building, unequal treatment, attacks on journalists, the bombing of humanitarian and medical facilities, the loss of civilian lives, and to require that international law be upheld.

It is critical that our government immediately condemn the occupation and the illegal settlements. There can be no resolution of the issues, as long as Israel absorbs the very land intended for a Palestinian state, and displaces Palestinian residents with Israeli settlers.

Canada must expressly insist that Israel respect international law when in conflict. After all, the Geneva Convention is Canadian as well as international law.

We also believe that Canada can make a substantive contribution to peace in the region by offering to host peace talks. Being a credible, honest broker at this critical time will require speaking clearly to the imperative – that the resolution of this dispute requires secure, sovereign and viable Israeli and Palestinian states living together in peace and mutual respect.

In pursuit of upholding the rights of Palestinians, we ask that Canada apply the same diplomatic tools that Canada has used in condemning China’s behaviour in Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, and in sanctioning Russian officials involved in the annexation of Crimea.

Too many innocent lives have been lost, destroyed and marred by this festering injustice. While there is great suffering today, there is also the opportunity for positive action and constructive change.

We urge the government to act in accordance with the values, principles and obligations that are the cornerstone of our country and the global community.

Thank you,

Salma Zahid, chair  
MP, Scarborough Centre

Mario Beaulieu, vice chair  
MP, La Pointe-de-l’Île

Alexandre Boulerice, vice chair  
MP, Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie

Paul Manly, vice chair  
MP, Nanaimo-Ladysmith

Chandra Arya  
MP, Nepean

Hon. Salma Atallahjan  
Senator, Ontario (Toronto)

Shaun Chen  
MP, Scarborough North

Pam Damoff  
MP, Oakville North-Burlington

Sukh Daliwhal  
MP, Surrey Newton

Don Davies  
MP, Vancouver Kingsway

Leah Gazan  
MP, Winnipeg Centre

Majid Jowhari  
MP, Richmond Hill

Iqra Khalid  
MP, Mississauga-Erin Mills

Kamal Khera  
MP, Brampton West

Adam van Koevreden  
MP, Milton

Joël Lightbound  
MP, Louis-Hébert

Elizabeth May  
MP, Saanich-Gulf Islands

Soraya Martinez Ferrada  
MP, Hochelaga

Lindsay Mathyssen  
MP, London—Fanshawe

Yasmin Ratansi  
MP, Don Valley East

Hon. Mohamed-Iqbal Ravalia  
Senator, Newfoundland and Labrador

Ruby Sahota  
MP, Brampton North

Sonia Sidhu  
MP, Brampton South

Marwan Tabbara  
MP, Kitchener South—Hespeler

Lenore Zann  
MP, Cumberland—Colchester

Patrick Weiler  
MP, West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country

## Appendix A

On May 11, 2021, a group of leading human rights experts issued the following statement.:

*UN human rights experts\* today expressed grave concerns about Israel's aggressive response to protests in East Jerusalem, and called on Israel, as the occupying power, to immediately lift its threat to evict hundreds of Palestinian households from their legally-protected homes.*

*"Re-establishing calm in Jerusalem is important, but creating the conditions for justice and equality in the City are even more important," the experts said. "Neither short-term calm nor long-term peace will be accomplished as long as the national and individual rights of the City's Palestinian population are routinely abrogated."*

*Hundreds of Palestinians, as well as some Israeli police officers, have been injured in clashes over recent days. The experts called on Israel to exercise full restraint in its policing of the demonstrations by Palestinians in Jerusalem, and to respect the freedoms of assembly, expression and religious worship.*

*"The recent scenes of Israeli police and security forces attacking large crowds of Palestinian residents and worshipers is only intensifying a deeply inflammatory atmosphere in the City. A militarized response to civilian protests against discriminatory practices only deepens social divisions. Respecting rights is the only path forward,"*

*The ongoing and threatened evictions of Palestinian families from their homes, primarily in the East Jerusalem neighbourhoods of Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan, are based on two Israeli laws: the Absentee Property Law of 1950 and the Legal and Administrative Matters Law of 1970. The 1950 law prohibits Palestinians from reclaiming their properties lost in the 1947-49 war, while the 1970 law allows Israeli Jews to re-claim properties lost during the same war. Evictions of Palestinian families under these laws have recurred many times over the years, raising deep concerns about impunity and lack of accountability.*

*"These laws are inherently discriminatory, both in intent and in application, and they violate fundamental principles of both international humanitarian law and international human rights law," said the experts. "An occupying power is prohibited from confiscating private property belonging to the protected population, and it must respect the body of existing laws which had governed the territory, unless it is absolutely necessary to alter them.*

*"The forced transfer of the population under occupation is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which contribute to the coercive environment now prevailing in East Jerusalem. As well, these evictions breach the right to adequate housing – a core human right in international law."*

*"The proper step for Israel to take is to remove the threat of eviction, have the property rights of these Palestinian families respected and legal regularized, and annul all discriminatory legislation from its laws."*

*Israel occupied East Jerusalem, along with the West Bank and Gaza, in 1967. Within weeks of the June 1967 war, it annexed East Jerusalem and parts of the West Bank. Over the past five decades, it has built 13 settlements, housing more than 220,000 Jewish settlers, in East Jerusalem.*

*The United Nations Security Council has repeatedly condemned both the annexation and the settlements as null and void under international law, and has demanded that Israel rescind its illegal acts. UN human rights experts have demanded repeatedly over the years that Israel comply with its international obligations and stop evictions, demolitions and forced removal of Palestinians from their lands. Israel has regularly stated that it has no intention of complying with the direction of the international community.*

*“The immediate source of the current tensions in East Jerusalem are the actions of Israeli settler organizations, whose stated aim is to turn Palestinian neighbourhoods into Jewish neighbourhoods. This demographic engineering has been abetted by the Jerusalem municipality, whose urban master plans have explicitly set a goal of limiting the City’s Palestinian population at 30 percent. Establishing official population targets such as this reinforce entrenched patterns of ethnic domination, which have no place in the modern world.”*

*(The experts: **Mr S. Michael Lynk**, [Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967](#). **Balakrishnan Rajagopal**, [Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context](#))*